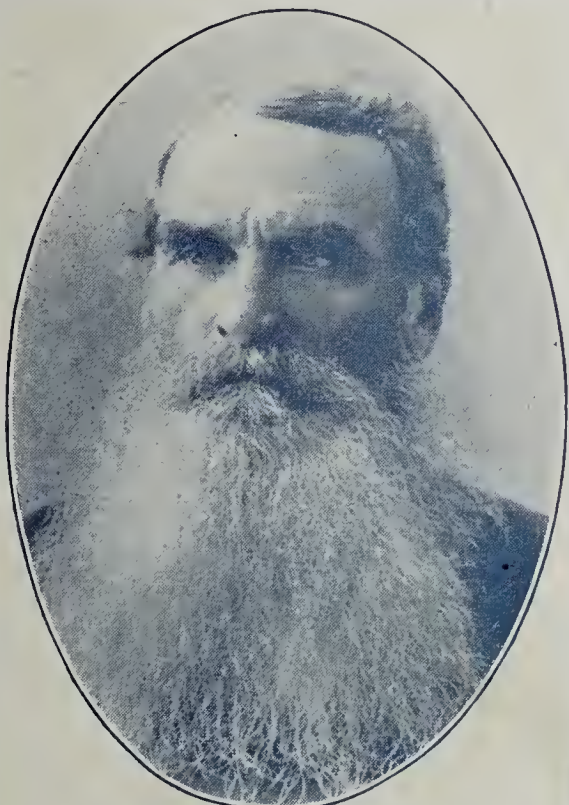


Taylor



BISHOP WILLIAM TAYLOR

Pioneer Series—No. 18

Bishop William Taylor

IN AFRICA

By MRS. O. W. SCOTT

PRICE TWO CENTS

Woman's Foreign Missionary Society
Methodist Episcopal Church
Publication Office, - Boston, Mass.

Bishop William Taylor

IN AFRICA

Memory recalls a camp ground on one of Pennsylvania's lofty hills. It is evening and the pine knots burning in large iron baskets on high standards cast a bright but flickering light over the encampment. In the near-by forest, katy-dids carry on their endless dispute. On the platform many ministers are sitting, and beside the desk a tall man, rugged in form and feature, is talking. Who is it? It is William Taylor, who, at General Conference of 1884 the previous May, had been made Bishop of Africa. The crowd listens to his plain, powerful sermon with intense interest; moved to smiles or tears by his illustrations, drawn not from one country alone but from at least half a dozen. But how did he get the knowledge which made a boy ask: "Has he been all over the world?"

To answer this question we must go back to old Virginia, where, in Rockbridge County, on May 2, 1821, his life history started. As

a little boy he learned to love God, but was not really called to work for Him until he was twenty. Then in a dream one night, he thought he heard a minister preach and sing, who said to him: "William, God has a special work for you to do." A little later his pastor gave him a license to exhort and while teaching in his native state he was called to preach.

Then began the career, which we can barely outline, that made William Taylor, not "A Man Without a Country" but a man with *many* countries. In 1848 he and his good wife Anne were sent to California as missionaries, for the California of that day was full of adventurers—wild and restless seekers for gold. For seven years he labored there with much success. Then, after an interval spent in eastern states and Canada, he went to Australia, where large numbers were added to the church.

Three years there, one in South Africa, and then, leaving his family in California, seven most fruitful years in India — where he started churches on the self-supporting plan, — and we find our evangelist in South America, still carrying out his original methods of work.

Those who care for a history of those busy and wonderfully successful years, will find it in his own books, seven of which he wrote, and from whose sales Mr. Taylor was able to support his family and aid his missions.

And now we come to the crowning event of his life, — his election

as Bishop of Africa. He was a member of the General Conference of 1884, at which Africa as a mission field was discussed. Up to this time the Methodist Church had not a single station in a heathen tribe except a small one in Krootown, Monrovia, in charge of Mary Sharp. Two negro Bishops, Roberts and Burns, had been sent out, and two American Bishops had visited the country, but the ship had been kept at anchor that they might not risk their lives for a single night on shore. Mr. Taylor ventures to suggest that if he were planning to kill Bishops he would advise them to spend their nights in that way—in the deadly climate, in the lower strata of malaria; but if they wished to preserve life, let them go directly to the highlands “eat where they labor, and sleep where they eat.” At that time he had no idea that he would have to swallow the pill he had prescribed for others.

When the election of Bishop for Africa came before the Conference, he was elected by a vote of 250 to 44; and, knowing his views on self-support, etc. the verdict was “Turn him loose in Africa.”

This election brought with it a two fold responsibility, first, to administer for the Missionary Society in Liberia; second, to found missions on his self supporting plan anywhere in the continent.

Connected with self-support he would have industries, such as were necessary to civilized life anywhere and also, wherever they could have a competent matron, he would establish nursery missions that little

children might be trained as Christians before they became heathen. As he said: "Children are never heathen, they are God's little lambs."

It was thought that he could not get missionaries to go on the "no salary" plan, but he soon had a company of about forty men, women and children, eager to follow him.

Instead of entering Africa at points that had been fatal to white men, he took his party inland from St. Paul de Loanda, which he reached in March 1885, making a line of six stations in Angola, each having a family or small company as nucleus. Suffering and privation came to these pioneers, but most of them proved their Christian courage by holding the ground, even to learning the difficult Kimbundu language which the Bishop declared "was picked from between the teeth of the natives."

It was difficult to establish the nursery mission, for little girls were held as property to be bought and sold at the father's pleasure. But, in due time, children were brought to them, mostly orphans.

One day a big native brought a three year old girl on his shoulder. She was covered with fresh marks of small pox and the man said the mother had died at Loanda about three months before and had asked him to take her to the missionaries at Malange — 300 miles journey. On the way she had small pox and "I nursed her for a whole moon, so today I put her in your care."

A little girl named Americana, who had been three years in the mission, looked closely at the new comer and asked her name. "Lubina" was the answer, "O, she is my sister!" exclaimed Americana.

The mother had formerly lived near Malange and had given her first baby to the mission.

Bishop Taylor, in a still cherished letter to the writer, says: "The first nursery we opened in Angola, about 400 miles inland, began with a little five year old boy named Chico. He accepted Jesus as his Saviour when about seven. He is now about thirteen. Chico is a good common school English scholar, equally good in Portuguese and his native Kimbundu. He is a good primary school teacher. I preach through him as my interpreter when visiting his nursery home. He is a good singer and plays the organ in our church services. He is the author of thirteen of the good Kimbundu hymns sung in our assemblies for preaching. We have all heard of the diamonds of Africa. Chico is one of them. We could utilize a million stock holders of one million each, for we are prospecting and working immeasurable mines sparkling with diamonds in the dark tunnels from which my miners are digging them, — diamonds to be set in the crown of the King of Glory. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts — He is the King of Glory."

This letter was written in 1895.

Perhaps "Diana" is as good an example of the "polished diamond" as we have. She was a little Grebo girl, brought to the United States by Miss McNeil, one of the Taylor missionaries, when three years old. Bishop Taylor took her to the General Conference in 1892, and before she returned to Africa she had earned pennies enough by her singing to purchase her freedom, for no little African girl is really free until her parents receive what a husband would pay for her.

Later she came again to America, and finally in 1909 graduated from the University of South California, and, as Mrs. Withey wrote, "marched in her cap and gown and took her degree of B. A. and her diploma, — a beautiful Christian Girl."

Bishop Taylor died in Palo Alto, California, May 19, 1902, having just passed his eighty-first birthday.

He had been called the "Flaming Torch" by the Africans, and he was indeed like the torch held high by the leader through their dark forests.

So when Bishop Taylor closed an unbroken itinerant ministry of fifty-five glorious years, we love to think that in many lands there lingered and still lingers, a radiance which makes the way of Christ plainer and easier for seeking souls.

Many words of praise were spoken after his death. One of the church papers classed him with Spurgeon, Beecher, Moody, Miller and Phillips Brooks, and believed that as a world-wide evangelist, he had no equal since St. Paul.

